

[Harriet Crow]

August 31, 1939

Harriet Crow, House wife,

Newton, N.C.

Ethel Deal, Writer,

Dudley W. Crawford, Reviser. Original Names Changed Names

Harriet Crow Helen Crane

Burke County Banks County

Ed Bacon Jim Banks

Charlotte Riverton

Preacher Moss Preacher Moore

b. C9- N.C. Box 1

"My name is Helen Crane. I'll soon be seventy years old and I'm trying to take it easier now, I've got to; but I have sure worked hard in my time. I was brought up in Banks County on a farm where we raised cotton, corn, taters, molasses cane and other things to eat.

"Money was as scarce as hen's teeth when I was coming up. I have hoed in the field from sunup to sun down for a quarter a day. I didn't git that to spend for myself. He never had any spending money, to tell you the truth I never seed no money till after I was married.

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"Cotton was so cheap it took all we made to pay the tax. Eggs sold for seven cents a dozen; we had to sell our chickens, eggs and butter to buy sugar, salt and things we couldn't do 'thout. The corn was made into bread. We eat cornbread three times a day. Sometimes Maw had biscuits, not often. We couldn't raise wheat up there but Paw allers had a couple a sackfuls. We made our cakes from the shorts of flour— lasses cakes at that, but they was good. There's a heap of difference in the times.

"Excuse me I want to slip off my shoes and git me a dip of snuff. I have just come in from the hospital, where my son's wife is sick and I couldn't take no snuff there I'm kinder ashamed of the habit, but I can't do without it.

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"I ain't got no education, jest what I learned from the blue back speller. It was four miles to the school house and we had school three months out of the year. The teacher, he set up front in a straight cheer, and the scholars set on slab benches. On long cold days the teacher dozed while we studied. There was a big fire place at the end of the room, but it didn't keep nobody warm. When it [would?] come a snow flurry it sailed through the cracks like everything.

"The teacher took turns about going home with the scholars. Us younguns liked that, when it come time for him to go home with us we had wheat biscuits.

"My girls are good cooks, and I reckon they come by it honest. Come saturday morning Maw would tell me to do enough baking for sunday, cause if we went to church we wouldn't have time for any cooking when we got back. I allers made a lot of cakes and pies.

"People don't know nothing about hard times this day and times. Most of them hain't done nothing but go to school. Back in my young days poor folks didn't have they money even to buy coffee, it run about twenty to twenty five cents a pound. We jest couldn't git it. Paw

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allers had an acre of ground he allers planted in rye, we took that and parched it brown and used it for coffee. This was 3 good and if we run out of rye, we used okra seed.

“Paw was a cobbler, and he allers made our shoes; they was put together with pegs,- Maw wove the cloth for our clothes. Paw would git us store shoes sometimes; and then we was proud younguns, we jest walked on air. One time I had a red woolen frock and Paw had bought me some store shoes— they squeaked, and I wouldn't swopped places with a millionaire.

“Old preacher Moore was holding a revival meeting, and I could hardly wait to go to church and I still remember what he said when I walked in with my shoes squeaking. He said, 'you're like a holler tree. Sound on the outside and holler on the inside'; I was so proud of them shoes I didn't care what he said.

“You young ones,” Helen said as she turned facing her off springs, “Don't know nothing. I wasn't raised up I was pulled up by the hair of the head.

“We've done pretty good, I married when I was about fourteen years old; stayed right on in Banks County and bought a farm. Just how we got it paid for I don't know. The next year after I was married I bought a sewing machine. My husband give me a piece of cotton to pay for it. I hoed that cotton and every time I struck a lick with the hoe, I'd strike a rock. The machine cost me fifteen dollars and it still sews good now, but I've got a newer and better one.

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“Ole man Jim Banks come up in the mountains hunting hands. He wanted us to come to the cotton mill, and we did. I had five younguns then, and have had three since I've come here.

“The younguns didn't make much then but we had a good crowd to work. We saved our money and paid thirty one hundred dollars to have this house [build?]. I've got a acre of

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ground. I like it. I have more here than on the farm, I mean I raise more to eat. My fruit trees, grapes and figs supply us with all the preserves and jellies. I have enough canned right now to last me three years.

"Every year I kill three hogs, we have so much trimming we have to can it up. I've got plenty of canned sausage, spare ribs and liver mush to do us all the summer. Then there's my chickens. I keep about forty hens and these furnish plenty of eggs and chickens.

"Now you jest come in and look around. The girls all work eight hours a day except saturday. One gets breakfast for me every morning before she goes to work. The other goes on every evening at two o'clock, she cleans up and helps me with the cooking and canning.

"This room on the left is our living room. The girls always wanted a pretty living room suit, radio and piano, so I didn't say one word about then buying it. Don't you think the lace curtains are pretty? This room across the hall is the company bed room. This bedroom suit is maple; and did you notice the counterpane and curtains match? I never did like a low back rocker, but the girls wanted to put one in here so there it is. They made all these cushions of green and rose. Next to this room is the dinning room. We thought we might as well buy a good dinning room suit while we was about it. I tell you I've done with cheap things in my house so long that I'm glad to get something nice. I'm real proud of every thing in this house.

"I want you to see my new cook stove and washing machine. I used to think it was silly to try to fix up the kitchen in different colors, but it was because I didn't know no better. It is so easy to have things look nice and don't cost no more, and you feel a lot better about it. Ain't the green and ivory stove a pruty thing? This washing machine cost me a hundred and thirty five dollars and it's worth every cent of it.

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"My home is all paid for and I've got enough money to do me and the girls if they never work no more. They'll work though as long as they can. I don't guess either one of them will ever marry. I still own the farm up in Banks County. It's got a lot of timber on it.

"I've been a widow for sixteen years. We have every thing we need. I keep a car, carry life insurance, and 6 save money. It was all made right here in the cotton mill. I have three nice bedrooms up stairs and one in the basement.

"I would like for Jim Banks to see me in my own home, but as I told you he is dead. His daughter has charge of that teaching grown people to read and write. She lives in Riverton.

"I wish you wouldt tell me some thing that would make our hair grow. You see I'm bald on the top of my head; both of my girls are going to be the same way. We have spent more money trying to get something to get something to make our hair come back, but it seems like the more we try the thinner it gets. Yes, we have [gone?] to several beauty parlors and took treatment after treatment but nothing seems to help. I believe the girls feel shy about it, and maybe that is the reason they don't encourage the young men to call on them.

"Now you jest set right down here and eat your supper, I ain't going to let you leave here till you do, we are jest having some of the things that was left over at dinner. Here's a plenty of creamed chicken, canned sausage scrambled eggs, snapbeans, creamed taters, preserves and jelly, and even some old fashioned honey. I believe the girls has got some banana and peach custard with whipped cream.

"Yes, me and the girls vote. I don't think its right though. I wish I had more education than I got. The girls 7 don't have none either, that and their hair is the reason they don't go out much. They jest naturally feel backwards.

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"I believe though, taking everything as a whole, we have been just as lucky as anybody else, and I am sure thankful to the Lord that we are all well and He has seen fit to give us what we have got."